

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2355

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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AMEMBASSY GABORONES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SF, PINT

SUBJECT: S.A. PROGRESSIVE-REFORM PARTY FORMED

REF: CAPE TOWN A-92

1. SUMMARY: FIVE MONTHS AFTER HIVING OFF FROM UNITED PARTY HARRY SCHWARZ-LED REFORMISTS HAVE OFFICIALLY JOINED FORCES WITH THE PROGRESSIVES TO FORM THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROGRESSIVE-REFORM PARTY. PROG-REFS STATED GOAL IS TO PRESENT " MODERATE" AND WORKABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NATIONALIST PARTY POLICIES, AND, NOT INCIDENTALLY, TO DISPLACE UP AS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION IN NEAR FUTURE. MERGER ACCOMPLISHED AT WELL-STAGED CONCURRENT AND JOINT MEETINGS IN JOHANNESBURG JULY 25-26. PARTY LEADERSHIPS HAD DONE GOOD JOB OF CONVINCING GRASSROOTS THAT MERGER BEST COURSE OF ACTION. SOME RESIDUAL RESENTMENT BUBBLED OVER BUT WAS LARGELY CONFINED TO EXTRANEIOUS ISSUE OF NEW PARTYS NAME. INCIDENTAL TO MERGER IS REFORMULATION OF OLD PROG POLICIES REGARDING CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR

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MULTI-RACIAL SOUTH AFRICA. NEW POLICY LARGELY ELIMINATES

QUALIFIED FRANCHISE AND ENVISIONS FEDERAL SETUP WITH POWERFUL STATES, INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY, BILL OF RIGHTS AND OTHER CHECKS AND BALANCES. END SUMMARY

2. APPROXIMATELY 1500 DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS GATHERED IN JOHANNESBURG JULY 25-26 TO APPROVE MERGER PROGRESSIVE AND REFORM PARTIES. MANY PROGRESSIVES, INCLUDING MP HELEN SUZMAN, HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN OPENLY COOL TO ALLIANCE, BUT HAD, AFTER CAREFUL PRODDING BY PROG LEADERSHIP, COME AROUND TO ACCEPTING WISDOM OF IT BY TIME OF PARTY CONGRESS.

3. HOWEVER, SOME BRUISED FEELING STILL APPARENT WHICH MANIFESTED THEMSELVES IN LARGELY EXTRANEIOUS BUT VOLUBLE DEBATES ABOUT NEW PARTY'S NAME. MANY REFORMISTS OBJECTED TO TITLE HYBRIDIZATION AND WANTED ENTIRELY NEW MONIKER (PREFERABLY REPUBLICAN OR FEDERAL PARTY) WHILE MANY PROGS WERE RANKLED BY OBVIOUS REFORMIST INTENT TO WATER DOWN IMPORTANCE OF "PROGRESSIVE" NAME IN NEW PARTY TITLE BY PRECEDING IT WITH HONORIFIC "SOUTH AFRICA". AT ONE POINT VIRULENCE OF DEBATE ON NAME IN PROG CONGRESS THREATENED TO DISRUPT MERGER STEAMROLLER PARTY LEADER. COLIN EGLIN WAS FORCED TO TELL DELEGATES TO ACCEPT NAME OR FORGET ALLIANCE. NAME WAS ACCEPTED.

4. MANY PROGS, PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM JOHANNESBURG ALSO LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GIVING HARRY SCHWARZ LEADERSHIP POSITION WITHIN PARTY. SCHWARZ HAD ORIGINALLY SAID HE DID NOT DESIRE ONE. BUT LAST MINUTE NEGOTIATING POSITION BY LOWER RANKING REFORMISTS DEMANDED A TOP JOB FOR HIM. PROGS GRUDGINGLY RESPONDED BY DIVIDING DUTIES FORMERLY HELD BY PROG PARTY CHAIRMAN RAY SWART. SWART KEEPS HIS TITLE OF FEDERAL CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY WHILE SCHWARZ BECOMES CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY'S FEDERAL EXECUTIVE. EGLIN MADE SPECIAL POINT OF TELLING DELEGATES DURING CLOSED SESSION OF PROG CONGRESS (WHICH DIPLOMATS ATTENDED) THAT SWART RPT SWART REMAINS NUMBER TWO IN NEW PARTY'S HIERARCHY. KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICAL OBSERVERS DENY THIS AND STATE UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT SCHWARZ (RPT SCHWARZ) POSITION IS SECOND ONLY TO EGLIN'S IN IMPORTANCE AND POWER.

5. FOCUS OF DEBATE ON LEADERSHIP AND NAME ACCURATELY REFLECT FACT THAT TWO PARTIES FOUND GENERALLY BROAD AGREEMENT ON MATTERS OF POLICY. PRINCIPLES OF POLICY OUT-
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LINE'S BY SCHWARZ AND EGLIN IN JUNE (REFAIR) WERE ACCEPTED WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT DEBATE, AS WAS MAJOR RESTRUCTURING OF PROG FRANCHISE AND CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES. ALBATROSS OF "QUALIFIED FRANCHISE" PROVISIONS OF PROG POLICY NOW ABANDONED AND REPLACED BY POLICY WHICH ENVISIONS ALL ADULTS WITH BASIC LITERACY HAVING ONE VOTE AND THOSE WITH EQUIVALENT OF GRADE SCHOOL EDUCATION (THROUGH STANDARD 8) TWO VOTES IN SELECTING REPRESENTATIVES TO FEDERAL HOUSE

OF ASSEMBLY. POWERS OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
AND CABINET IN ENVISIONED SYSTEM WOULD BE LIMITED BY BILL OF RIGHTS
WATCHDOG SENATE, INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY AND OTHER CHECKS
AND BALANCES (FULLER DETAILS BY AIRGRAM)

6. RHETORIC AND MOOD AT JULY 26 JOINT MEETING OF TWO
PARTIES WHERE MERGER FORMALLY APPROVED WAS BOUYANT AND
AGGRESSIVE. SPEAKERS EMPHASIZED THAT ALLIANCE MEANT
BEGINNING COMPLETE POLARIZATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WHITE
POLITICAL THINKING AND END TO UPS POSITION AS
OFFICIAL OPPOSITION. SCHWARZ AND EGLIN STRESSED NEW PARTY
IS "MODERATE" AND ONLY LOGICAL ALTERNATIVE TO SOCIETY
BASED ON RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. SCHWARZ MADE SPECIFIC PLEA TO
AFRIKANERS TO JOIN WHAT IS OVERWHELMINGLY ENGLISH-SPEAKING
GROUP WHILE EGLIN ISSUED INVITATION TO THOSE LIBERALS
REMAINING IN UP TO JOIN IDEALOGICAL COMPATRIOTS IN NEW
PARTY.

7. PRP COMES INTO BEING WITH 11 MPS AND ONE SENATOR. IT
IS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION ON JOHANNESBURG CITY COUNCIL AND
HAS SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF MEMBERS ON TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL
COUNCIL. SOME SPECULATION EXISTS THAT ONE MP (PROBABALY
EX-REFORMISTS DAVID DALLING OR SCHWARZ HIMSELF) MIGHT RESIGN
PARLIAMENTARY SEAT TO FORCE BY-ELECTION IN WHICH UP COULD BE
SERIOUSLY DRUBBED. MORE PROBABLE IS ENTRANCE OF
PRP CANDIDATE (PROBABLY EX-UPER TIAAN VAN DER MERWE) IN
BELLVILLE CONSTITUENCY (CAPE TOWN SUBURB) BY-ELECTION
WHICH WILL BE SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER. GOAL
THERE WOULD NOT BE WINNING BUT RATHER FORCING UP INTO
EMBARRASSING THIRD POSITION TO ADD MOMENTUM TO NEW PARTYS
RECRUITMENT DRIVE.

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